

Tangerine Study Guide

Tangerine by Edward Bloor

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Plot Summary

Paul Fisher is twelve years old when his family moves from Houston to Tangerine County, Florida, where his father is to be a civil engineer for the county. Paul's father and brother, Erik, have already gone to Florida, leaving Paul and his mother to make the drive alone. As they leave, Paul has a scene at the edge of his memory but can't quite pull it up. Paul enrolls in the Lake Windsor Middle School where he tries out for the soccer team. But when the coach discovers that Paul is legally blind, he removes him from the team despite Paul's obvious ability.

The family soon realizes that the housing development where they are to attend is not perfect due to mistakes in the county's civil engineering department. There are also problems at the school, and when several of the portable buildings used for classrooms fall into a sinkhole, Paul has the chance to transfer to another school - Tangerine Middle School. He manages to avoid telling them that he is legally blind and is accepted as a member of the soccer team. Meanwhile, Paul's father is wrapped up in what Paul calls the Erik Fisher Football Dream. Everything revolves around Erik's football schedule and Paul's father never attends a soccer game. But Erik is a cruel bully and when he benefits from the death of a fellow football team member, Paul hears him laughing in the back yard.

One day Paul has friends over to work on a science project and Erik makes fun of them, going so far as to hit a boy named Tino in the face. Paul can't bring himself to tell on Erik but a few days later he is watching when Tino's brother, Luis, confronts Erik at the football field. Erik's friend hits Luis in the head with a blackjack and a few days later, Luis dies. It's also discovered that Erik and his friend have been burglarizing houses in the neighborhood - a fact Paul's mother discovers. Paul finally comes forward with the information of the assault against Luis as well. When Paul's grandparents learn of the situation, Grandpop says that it's because Erik wasn't punished when he hurt Paul's eyes.

Meanwhile, Paul is struggling to recall a childhood memory. He catches glimpses of it occasionally but one night he suddenly remembers, when he was five and the family lived in another city, Erik and a friend sprayed paint in Paul's eyes as retribution because they thought he'd told on them for spray painting a wall. With Paul's memory, the family is no longer able to ignore Erik's cruelty.

Pages 1 - 50

Pages 1 - 50 Summary

As the story opens, Paul and his mother are preparing to set out for Florida from their home in Houston. The house has been sold and Paul notes that his mother wants to go back through the house to be sure absolutely nothing is left behind.

Part one begins with an entry dated Friday, August 18. Paul says that his mother takes on the move from Houston to Florida as she would have a "military operation." She calculates the exact time it will take to cover the distance and figures in the stops they'll make for gas so that they leave at six in the morning in Houston and arrive at nine that night in Tangerine County, Florida. They arrive safely and on time and find Paul's dad and Erik already there, as planned. Dad says that he's been trying to get organized at his new work and that the boss, Charley Burns, is out of town. Dad says that he's been told he can set his own hours which means he'll be able to attend Erik's football practice every day. He then launches into Erik's future career in football - a topic Paul calls the "Erik Fisher Football Dream." As soon as that conversation started, Paul asked to be excused and went to find his bedroom.

On Saturday, August 9, Paul wakes to a lightning storm, and when he wakes at seven the next morning, he goes outside where he discovers the air filled with smoke. He calls out the news to his mother, who says that Erik and his dad have already left the house, headed to the University of Florida football stadium to look around. Paul and his mother, unable to discover the source of the smoke, call the fire department. When the Tangerine Volunteer Fire Department arrives, a young man named Wayne says that there's a "muck fire" in the fields behind the Fishers' house, started by the lightning the previous night. Paul and his mother learn that the fire has been burning for years, but the regular lightning storms sometimes "stir it up." Later that day, a thunderstorm hits and Paul and his mother have to reset all the electrical appliances and clocks when the electricity goes off. Paul goes out on his bike and looks over their subdivision - Lake Windsor Downs. It's nearing completion, though there is still some construction. Mr. Costello, president of the Lake Windsor Downs Homeowners' Association, drops in for a visit just about the time Paul's dad and Erik return. Mr. Costello's son, Mike, is a member of the Lake Windsor High football team, the Lake Windsor Seagulls, and Mr. Costello goes to get Mike. The two return and the talk centers around football.

On Monday, August 21, Paul notes that his father's arrival at his new job at the Civil Engineering Department of Tangerine County will soon change how that department's run, that Erik will change the football team and that his mother will change the Lake Windsor Homeowners' Association, but Paul wonders what difference he will make. Paul's mom takes him to school and she introduces herself as Caroline Fisher to the Lake Windsor Middle School Principal, Mrs. Gates. Paul's mother explains to Mrs. Gates that Paul is "legally blind," and that they want to see Paul's classes so that he'll know where he's going when school starts. They are shown to a series of portable



buildings that are used for classrooms and Paul asks about the soccer team. He tells Mrs. Gates that he plays goalie. Because his mother said Paul was legally blind, they have to fill out an "individualized education plan" which is to outline goals within his "special needs." As they leave the school, Paul's mom stops the car and they look at the portable buildings, which are now sitting in the middle of a flooded field.

On Wednesday, August, 23, Erik, Paul and their parents are at the Lake Windsor High School where Erik is to join the football team. Paul notes that Erik had been a soccer player and that he'd perfected a kick using the soccer ball that he'd transferred to a football. That kick gained him a spot as kicker on a football team and his father became a sports fan when Erik started showing such potential. Paul meets Mike Costello's younger brother, Joey, who is in Paul's class. Paul watches a practice of the Lake Windsor Middle School soccer team and realizes that he's a better goalie than anyone on the team, and that he'll be sure to get a spot.

On Monday, August 28, school starts and Paul catches the bus at the entrance to the subdivision along with other kids who live in the neighborhood. Suddenly, Paul is caught up in a memory and he recalls a boy Erik's age asking why Paul wore such thick glasses. Erik explained that Paul had stared at an eclipse and that it had damaged his eyesight, prompting the other boy to call Paul "Eclipse Boy." At school, Paul is assigned a "guide" for a couple of days, a standard practice with "vision impaired students." Paul tells the girl that he really doesn't need her help and she agrees to be available if he should discover that he does need to ask her something.

On Wednesday, August 30, Erik is starting to hang out with a boy named Arthur Bauer, also a member of the football team, and it seems evident that one of the cheerleaders will be his girlfriend. Paul notes that Erik has never had any interest in learning to drive but Arthur has a truck. Joey tells Paul that Arthur has never yet played in a game.

On Thursday, August 31, Paul's mom is named to the homeowners' association and Paul and Joey begin running together. On Friday, September 1, Paul meets other members of the soccer team, including Tommy Aceso and Gino Deluca, who is likely to be captain of the team. Mr. Walski is the coach and an eighth-grade teacher. During practice that day, Paul makes a good play and knows that he's going to be picked as first-string goalie.

Pages 1 - 50 Analysis

As Paul and his mother are preparing to leave Houston for the final time, Paul looks back and the scene prompts a memory of some boys coming down the street in a car. One boy has a baseball bat and is hanging out the window. Paul rushes home, very frightened, and tells his parents that Erik had tried to kill him. Paul's parents point out Erik, already in the house, and say that's it's impossible that Erik was in that car. It seems likely that Paul saw someone and that the person he saw wasn't Erik. But more importantly, it seems likely that Paul is reacting to the repressed memory of the childhood incident in which he lost most of his vision. In that incident, Paul learned to be



afraid of Erik. The incident is not revealed until the end of the book, but the reader is clear from the beginning of the book that something happened to make Paul fear Erik. What's eventually revealed is that Erik and a friend had spray painted graffiti on a wall. When the friend is caught, Paul is blamed for having tattled. Erik holds Paul down and pries his eyes open while the friend sprays paint in Paul's eyes. Paul's parents are fully aware of the event but try to explain that they'd thought Paul too young to remember the event and had wanted to protect Erik from Paul's hatred.

Paul notes that there's an incredible difference between the way Mike Costello looks at football and the way Erik looks at it. Erik is passionate but he's also self-centered, while Mike evidently focuses on what's best for the team. Mike points out that the coach sometimes sends a kicker in but really makes a run for the extra points. Erik says that the coach knows "what I can do" and that he would never waste Erik's talents on a false set-up for a kick. Mike counter that the decision will be the coach's. Erik seems ready to argue the point but drops it.

Paul's vision loss is not so severe that he can't see at all. His mother admits that it has gotten better over the years, rather than worse, but Paul is still declared "legally blind." Paul's mother seems compelled to try to protect Paul from situations where he might be hurt, but seems perfectly willing to allow him to play soccer. Paul himself says that he isn't blind and resents the attention to his vision problem. At one point, Paul and his father are on the high school football field when Paul sees an osprey - a bird of prey. He says some people would mistake it for a hawk but that he knows the difference. Paul says that there's no way a blind person could see the osprey, let alone tell the difference between the two kinds of birds. That osprey will later become an issue. There's a lake on the property of the subdivision and the lake is stocked with koi. The homeowners' association keeps wondering about the disappearance of the koi from the lake and believes someone is stealing the fish. It's Paul who solves that mystery and points out the real culprits - the osprey that are so plentiful in the area.



Pages 50 - 94

Pages 50 - 94 Summary

On Tuesday, September 5, Paul and his mom are carrying groceries inside when Erik arrives home with Arthur. Erik tells her that Mike Costello had been touching the goal post when the afternoon lightning storm hit and that he'd been killed. Paul's mom tries to reach Paul's father but he doesn't answer. Then he calls from the hospital with basically the same information Erik had given. Paul hears Arthur and Erik outside talking about Mike. They are making fun of the fact that Mike's hair was burned from one side of his head and laughing about the actions of Joey, who was present at the football practice. Joey had run to Mike's body, trying to take the shoes off his feet. Paul can't imagine why Erik and Arthur are laughing about Mike's death but then realizes that the two of them will be elevated in the football team by Mike's absence.

On Wednesday, September 6, Paul's mother expects that school will be canceled because of Mike's death, but even football practice goes on as usual. Paul thinks about Joey and wonders how Joey is feeling. He wonders how he would feel if it had been Erik. He knows that Erik is part of the secret around the loss of Paul's vision, and says he would be sad if Erik died and took that memory with him. On Thursday, September 7, Paul's mom calls every parent of a football player and asks them to come to a meeting. The principal and football coach show up as well. One parent says that his son is depending on a football scholarship for college and that they can't afford not to have practice. The coach says that the team as a whole can't do without practice time. Bill Donnelly, father of Terry who is also on the team, says that his house has been hit by lightning three times and that he agrees that practice time should be changed. Several parents agree that they'll help set up a carpool so that the players can arrive at school prior to class time for practice. The coach says that he'd prefer that they have practice at the normal time but that he will have the players vacate the field if there's lightning.

On Friday, September 8, Paul is on the soccer field. He wears special goggles instead of his normal glasses when he's playing and has been tagged with the nickname "Mars" because of it. Paul is called out of practice and the coach tells him that he's ineligible to play because he is handicapped. He cites the fact that they can't insure him. Paul is so angry that he cries. When his mother picks him up, he tells her what happened. His mother says she's certain that his eyesight has improved and she and Paul's father try to rectify the situation, but Paul remains ineligible to play. Later that day, Paul and his parents go to O'Sullivan's Funeral Home for Mike's wake. Joey learns that Paul was kicked off the soccer team and later brings the conversation up again. Joey, whose father is a lawyer, says he believes his dad might be able to file a lawsuit on Paul's behalf. Joey then invites Paul to go with a group of boys to the carnival. He says that his mother doesn't want him to stay at home and that she's taken the attitude that life must go on for the rest of the family. Paul says he will. On Saturday, September 9, Paul's parents are arguing about the fact that football practice wasn't cancelled for Mike's funeral. At the carnival, Paul sees a group of boys with soccer balls and Joey says they



are from Tangerine Middle School, and that they are known to be tough. Paul sees the group several times over the course of the evening.

On Monday, September 11, Paul is in class when he's called to the principal's office. There, he finds that several members of the soccer team are already present and that the school officials are questioning them about their time at the carnival over the weekend. Paul learns that some boys with a soccer ball destroyed an exhibit at the carnival. Paul almost immediately realizes that it was the group from Tangerine Middle School and when pressed, he shares that information. Joey and the others pick up on it almost immediately and confirm Paul's suspicions. Outside the office, Paul tells Joey that he's worried over the fact that they "ratted on" the soccer team from Tangerine, but Joey says they will never know who told on them. As they are headed back to class, Paul and Joey hear a horrible noise and rush outside. They see a sinkhole forming, literally sucking several of the portable classrooms into the ground. Joey and Paul join a line of students who are pulling students up and out of the hole. When the last of the students are out of the building, the students pull each other up as well. Paul's glasses are so smeared with mud that he can't see and Gino takes them from him, helping to clear off the mud. The principal orders students who are injured to the office and tells others to catch their busses, which are running early. Later in the day, Paul's Grandmom and Grandpop call from Ohio after seeing the story on CNN. Paul's father is fielding calls from reporters and officials who demand to know how the school got a building permit when the ground was obviously unsafe. Paul is proud of himself and his classmates, saying that they'd been afraid but had still done what was necessary to ensure that no students died in the tragedy.

On Tuesday, September 12, the school is faced with the task of trying to figure out how to handle the students without the portable buildings, which have all now been declared unsafe. There's a corner of the soccer and baseball fields that have also been condemned as well as half the football bleachers. On Tuesday, September 14, Charley Burns - the man over the department where Paul's father works - is called to task for his actions. He's apparently been accepting bribes from contractors who convinced Charley to ignore rules when awarding building permits. Paul says that Charley is fired one evening and Paul's dad is named head of the department by noon the following day. On Friday, September 15, Paul's mother begins looking into alternatives to the school situation. She tells Paul that she wants to send him to a Catholic school called St. Anthony's. Paul argues and his father says that he wants to wait to see what school officials can work at for the Lake Windsor Middle School students. That night there's a meeting and the room is packed as Mrs. Gates outlines the plan. There are two options available to Paul and other students in his grade. They can participate in a split schedule in which some of the students will have classes in the morning and others in the evenings, or he can move to Tangerine Middle School. Paul calls that option a "miracle." He believes that if he moves to Tangerine, he'll be able to join the soccer team without informing school officials of his vision problem. Paul immediately puts the plan to his mother. Paul says that his move to Florida has been "ruined" by the fact that school officials learned of his vision problem and that the move will be the opportunity to fix it. His mother is already agreeing by the time his father approves the plan.



Pages 50 - 94 Analysis

Paul's mother's reaction to Mike's death is to demand that football practice not take place in the afternoon when lightning storms are an almost daily occurrence. Paul's father, who has by this time become one of the staunch supporters of the football team, objects because he knows the team members and the coach will object. What's interesting here is that Paul's mother seems to be very worried about Erik while almost everyone else is willing to put the team's practice time ahead of safety. When Paul's father says that Eric can't possibly do without the practice time, Paul's mother says, "Dead boys don't kick," indicating that she realizes that it could have been Erik who was killed on that football field instead of Mike.

Paul's life is impacted by the fact that he wears glasses when there aren't many of his classmates in that situation. He says that the "coolest guys" aren't carrying umbrellas on a day when it's raining, but that those guys are also not forced to clean the rain off their glasses before they can see again.

When Paul has the opportunity to move to Tangerine Middle School, he realizes it's the chance to start over without the stigma of being labeled handicapped. He wants desperately to make that move and sets out to convince his parents before they even leave the Lake Windsor School where they learned of the school's alternative plan. Paul tells his parents that he doesn't mind if his father doesn't pay any attention to him. This catches his dad's attention and instead of answering Paul's question as to whether Paul can change schools, his father goes back to that statement. He asks Paul what he meant and it seems he might be about to disagree with Paul's assessment that Erik's football takes precedence over everything, but then stops. Paul realizes that he doesn't get the same amount of attention from his father as Erik, and this does seem to bother Paul as it would any child. But he also seems to realize now that being able to play is more important than having his father's attention. In this way, Paul and Erik are dramatically different. Erik only wants attention. He seeks out every way he can imagine to get the attention of family and friends while Paul wants only to play soccer because he loves the game.



Page 96 - 150

Page 96 - 150 Summary

On Monday, September 18, Paul goes for his first day of school at Tangerine Middle School. He assures his mother that he doesn't need his records and that there's no need for her to take anything to the school for him other than his class schedule from Lake Windsor Middle School. Paul is introduced to Theresa Cruz, also in seventh grade, and told that she would help him find his classes for the first day of school. Theresa is not very talkative at first and Paul keeps trying to get information from her. He learns that Tino Cruz, a member of the soccer team, is Theresa's twin brother, though Tino is out of school because he's been suspended for wrecking an exhibit at the carnival. Other members of the team, including Hernando and Victor, are also suspended. Paul realizes that it was he and Joey who told on Tino and caused the suspensions. Paul also learns that there are several girls on the team, including Shandra Thomas. Paul has a moment's fear when his seventh period teacher turns out to be the wife of the Lake Windsor Middle School guidance counselor. He fears she'll know that Paul is handicapped and will share that information with Tangerine School officials and so pledges to work hard at remaining unnoticed in her class. At soccer practice that afternoon, Paul tells the coach - Betty Bright - that he'd played soccer since he was very young and had been a goalie the previous year in Houston. He's put on the field for practice but warned that Shandra is the first-string goalie and that he can't expect to step in and take her place. Paul is happy for the chance to prove himself. His mother picks him up after practice and says that Tangerine school officials had called, asking for his records from Lake Windsor. Paul is devastated, knowing that they'll now know about his handicap. But his mother says that she picked up the records herself and delivered them, and that the information about his vision problem had vanished on the trip. Paul calls that a second miracle.

On Tuesday, September 16, Paul meets other members of the team, including Victor Guzman. Victor, Tino and Hernando tell about the incident at the carnival. One of them had been started and had "karate kicked" an exhibit, breaking it and prompting them all to run out. They believe they were caught because Tino had been carrying a soccer ball and that Betty Bright had known immediately who was to blame. At one point Paul is tending goal when he stops a ball kicked by Victor. Paul hesitates and Victor hits the ball, hitting Paul in the process. There erupts an argument between Victor and Tino, with Tino saying that Victor's goal didn't count. The boys are angry but later go about their friendship like arguments of this nature are commonplace. As Paul heads to his mother's car, another of the players - Maya - commends Paul on the save and says that in a real game, Victor's kick after Paul had stopped the ball would not have counted.

On Wednesday, September 20, Paul is given a jersey with the number 5 on it. Joey and Paul are at Paul's house when Erik and Arthur arrive. The older boys immediately begin making fun of Joey, laughing about the fact that he'd been trying to "take Mohawk Man's shoes." Joey figures out that they're talking about the day Mike died and he later



explains to Paul. He says the first thing Mike always did upon arriving at home was to take off his shoes. Joey says that even though he'd known Mike was dead at the football field, he'd tried to do the only thing he could think of that might make a difference - help Mike get his shoes off so that he'd be more comfortable. Joey says he'd know it wouldn't matter, even at that moment, but that he'd wanted to do something. Paul suggests that Joey might transfer from Lake Windsor Middle School to Tangerine. Joey says that it's too late for the move because he's agreed to attend the split schedule. Paul counters that Joey's father is a lawyer, that the school is obviously fearful of a lawsuit, and that they'd do whatever Joey wanted.

On Friday, September 22, the Tangerine Middle School War Eagles face the Palmetto Middle School Whippoorwills. The team plays rough and the referee doesn't make any calls for the obvious fouls. The team members on the sidelines are pelted by Whippoorwill fans. Paul is put in and a member of the opposing team hits him - another obvious foul - then throws mud in his eyes. Paul tackles the player and begins hitting him until he's pulled off. He spends the remainder of the game on the sidelines with blood running from his nose. Paul is upset that he didn't play well but later Victor tells him that his actions had been noted by his teammates. He says that a member of the team is a member of the team, on the field or off. Victor says the team acts as a team regardless of the situation, an obvious offer of friendship which Paul accepts. Later that day, Joey calls Paul with the news that he's transferring to Tangerine. Paul tells Joey that getting in with the right crowd at Tangerine requires the right connections and urges that he ask for Theresa Cruz as a guide.

On Saturday, September 23, the Lake Windsor High Seagulls play their first game. With a score of 7-6, Erik is up to kick for the Seagulls. Everyone had expected that Arthur would be Erik's holder but an offensive player named Antoine takes the field instead. The ball is snapped and Erik rushes forward to kick but at the last second, Antoine picks up the ball and rushes for the extra points. Paul says that Erik doesn't realize that the ball has moved and kicks. When the ball isn't there, Erik loses his balance, flies into the air, and land on his back while the crowd laughs at Erik and cheers Antoine. Erik's kick is covered on the evening news that night and the commentators laugh about his fall, saying that they wonder if the school has given thought to having a diving team.

On Tuesday, September 26, Paul is at another game and he notes the number of parents who are watching the game. He stops and wonders why his own parents aren't there, and why Joey's parents aren't there. Paul says that if he and Joey were playing football, both sets of parents would be there. Victor was injured in the game against the Whippoorwills and during this game, his head begins to bleed again. Coach Bright asks if Victor's parents are attending and he says they aren't. She sends Tino to ask his father to take Victor to the emergency room. Victor objects but Coach Bright isn't willing to let him wait. Paul goes in the game in Victor's place and scores a goal. Paul is amazed at himself, saying that he's seldom played any position other than goalie and doesn't ever remember making a score. Later, Victor asks Paul how he did and points out that anything Paul did on the field is a reflection on Victor. Paul says that he could score only one goal for Victor and Victor high-fives Paul in congratulations. That night, Grandmom and Grandpop call and talk to Paul for awhile before his mother takes the



phone. Later, his mom brings him the phone and it's a girl from Lake Windsor Middle School named Cara Clifton. She hints that her friend, Kerri Gardner, likes Paul. He isn't sure how to respond but reflects back on the conversation later that Kerri has seen him in his glasses and doesn't seem to think that makes him hopeless.

On Wednesday, September 27, Victor begins teasing Joey the way he'd done to Paul, but Joey doesn't handle it well and is just angry at the situation. When they arrive back at Lake Windsor Downs, they see that several houses on the block are completely covered with large, blue tents. There is an emerging problem with termites and other pests and Joey says his own house is due to be fumigated soon. Paul's mother asks what the family is supposed to do while the tent is in place and Joey says that they have to leave home for a few days. Paul's mother invites Joey to spend his time at their house but Joey declines the offer. Paul notes that he knew Joey wouldn't agree because Erik's actions have made the Fisher house off-limits to Joey. On Friday, September 29, Paul reads the story in the Tangerine Times about his soccer team. Mr. Donnelly, the man who lives in the Lake Windsor Subdivision and who is the editor of the local newspaper showed up at soccer practice the previous day. Paul knows right away that his mother, who was very interested in the fact that there are girls on Paul's team, has alerted Mr. Donnelly to the fact that one of them is the high scorer in the county. As soon as the cameraman shows up, Shandra leaves the practice field. Coach Bright tells Mr. Donnelly that Shandra doesn't want any publicity and that she's going to support that decision. Mr. Donnelly agrees to that demand and Coach Bright does give him Maya's full name, which is Maya Pandhi.

On Monday, October 2, Paul's class is involved in a project. They are asked to split off into groups and Paul asks if he and Joey can join Tino and Theresa's group. Another student named Henry joins the group as well. Joey says he doesn't want to be in the group with Tino but follows Paul to their group anyway. Joey later tells Paul that he's turned in his jersey and will no longer play on the soccer team. When Paul asks why, Joey says that he's going to play football when he gets in high school and that he's no longer interested in soccer.

Page 96 - 150 Analysis

Paul accepts that Theresa will be his guide at Tangerine Middle School, which initially seems strange considering that he was angry at being assigned a guide at Lake Windsor Middle School. But the circumstances are different. Paul isn't considered "legally blind" at Tangerine and the purpose of the guide is merely to show him around. At Lake Windsor, Paul had been assigned a guide because the school officials had assumed that he couldn't see well enough to navigate on his own. This difference is important in recognizing the impact his poor vision has had on Paul's self-image.

As the family discusses the play in which Erik falls because Antoine grabs the ball and runs with it, Paul's mother sums up the play by saying that Erik had done something that helped the team win the game. Paul's father can't argue that point without making it clear that he is more interested in Erik than in the team, and so reluctantly agrees with



her. He says, however, that the play isn't something that people will remember and it doesn't help Erik's personal stats - meaning it won't help him get into college. But Paul disagrees on one of those points. He says that everyone is going to remember that kick because it was comically reminiscent of the famous scene in which Lucy promises to hold the ball for Charlie Brown, only to pull it away at the final moment so that Charlie Brown falls.

It's evident that Joey and Paul are very different people and that they handle their initiations into the society at Tangerine Middle School very differently. When Paul is teased by Victor and the others, he comes back with replies of his own that make it clear that he isn't offended by their teasing. This makes him immediately accepted. Joey, however, is upset that he isn't immediately accepted. This difference can be explained by the fact that the two boys have very different reasons for transferring to Tangerine Middle School. For Joey, the transfer was more of an escape. He wasn't looking for something better for himself but was merely hoping to get away from a bad situation. Joey was accepted at Lake Windsor and had friends there. He evidently expects that his reputation as a popular student will follow him to Tangerine. Paul, on the other hand, is obviously looking to better himself. Paul hopes to change his situation with the move to Tangerine and sets out with the attitude that he has to prove himself. For example, he is willing to play second-string on the soccer team until he makes that difference.



Page 150 - 199

Page 150 - 199 Summary

On Tuesday, October 3, Paul says that Tino and Theresa reveal that they have a good idea for their project. Their brother, Luis, has been working on a new strain of tangerine for many years and has named the new tree "Golden Dawn." When they are splitting up the duties for the project, most agree that Theresa should type it up but Joey interrupts, saying that everyone should put their work on a computer disk and that he'll print it out at home. Joey and Tino clash over who has the lead role in the project and they argue. Joey then turns on Paul, accusing him of being scared of Tino and the others. Joey and Tino fight and they are both taken from the room. Tino is suspended because he'd lunged at Joey and Joey joins another group.

On Wednesday, October 4, there's a meeting of the homeowners' association and Paul learns that in an effort to eliminate the muck fire, they've ordered water sprayed on the area, which didn't put out the fire but has created a breeding ground for mosquitoes. To combat the insects, a truck will be coming through every other evening to spray pesticides. On Thursday, October 5, Joey doesn't show up for school and Paul, who isn't surprised, learns that Joey has transferred back to Lake Windsor. The group working on the project together agree that they're going to go to Theresa and Tino's house where they'll meet Luis and learn about the new tangerine tree. Henry's brother is Wayne Dilkes, the young fireman who showed up the day Paul and his mother thought their house was on fire. Wayne drives Paul and Henry to Theresa's house after school one day. There they learn how the tangerine operation works. Later, when Wayne gives Paul and Henry a ride home, Paul learns that Wayne has been hired to spray for mosquitoes. He tells Paul that there were groves of tangerine trees bulldozed into holes and then covered with dirt, and that those trees rotting in the ground has created the current situation, which includes the termites.

On Thursday, November 2, Paul says that his life is suddenly very busy and that he's glad he's part of the soccer team. On Saturday, November 4, Paul shows up at the Cruz farm on an invitation from Luis. He pitches in and works with them all day, and by the end of the day, he's sunburned and tired. Tino is impressed that Paul has worked so hard with the family and Paul, feeling their friendship is now solid, confesses that he told that Tino was in the group that destroyed the exhibit at the carnival. Tino kicks Paul, then says that if any of the Lake Windsor soccer players ever ask what happened when Tino found out, Paul can tell them that Tino kicked him in the rear.

On Sunday, November 5, Paul and the family is invited to Mr. Donnelly's house. Paul learns that Coach Bright had been a promising Olympic athlete in the track and field division. On Tuesday, November 7, a soccer game is rained out. On Wednesday, November 8, the Tangerine Times features a long article about the history of soccer in the county and about Coach Bright. On Friday, November 10, the Tangerine Middle School faces the Lake Windsor Middle School. Paul gets in some playing time. At



halftime, the Lake Windsor coach comes to talk to Coach Bright. He says that Paul is ineligible to play because he lives in the Lake Windsor School District and Coach Bright counters that he doesn't want to start that conversation. She then says that she's fully aware that Shandra's brother, Antoine Thomas, plays football for Lake Windsor and that everyone knows where Shandra and her brother live. The Lake Windsor coach walks away without pressing the issue. The game comes down to a final play with Paul at the net and the Lake Windsor player, Gino, with a free shot. Paul knows how Gino tends to shoot and he prepares for that shot. Gino changes the shot but misses and tells Paul that the miss was because Paul threw him off.

Page 150 - 199 Analysis

Luis walks with a limp but is obviously very close to Theresa and Tino. Before Paul ever goes to their house for the first time, Theresa warns him not to talk down to Luis - she says that Tino won't stand for it. Luis is equally protective of Theresa and Tino. This is a close-knit family, a direct contrast to Paul's family.

As the game between Lake Windsor and Tangerine comes to a close, the Tangerine team is wild with excitement. It's the final game of the regular season and they come off with a victory, due at least partly to Paul. The team is about to board the bus when Paul's mother says that she'll just take him home. Paul objects, saying he wants to go on the bus with the team. His mother points out that she'll then have to drive all the way to the Tangerine Middle School, pick up Paul and drive right back past the Lake Windsor Middle School on their way home. Paul says that he realizes it means extra driving, but that it's what he wants to do. His mother gives in. Paul is asserting himself a little more as he matures and this is an example of the theme, coming of age.



Pages 201 - 299

Pages 201 - 299 Summary

On Monday, November 20, Tino, Theresa and the other members of Paul's project group come to Paul's house to work on the final layout of their project, which they've agreed Paul should do on his computer. After they come to decisions about the fonts and graphics, they go outside. Erik and Arthur come through the back gate and begin taunting the group, Erik pointing out that the "farm labor kids" have been invited to town. Paul urges Tino to ignore them, but Tino can't, and when he confronts Erik, Erik hits him full in the face with his fist. Tino and the others leave, as does Erik and Arthur. On Tuesday, November 21, Paul wants to tell his father about Erik's attack but can't bring himself to do so. That evening, Paul goes with his mom to their storage locker to pick up some winter clothing. Paul's mom says she has a meeting with Erik's guidance counselor the following day and Paul asks why. She Erik's grades have slipped but then asks Paul if he knows some reason Erik might be in trouble. Paul wants to tell her that Erik is completely out of control, but doesn't. While his mother is in the school talking about Erik, Paul goes to the football field and stands under the stadium where he hopes to be out of Erik's sight. There he sees Luis walk up and confront Erik about having hit Tino. Erik walks past Luis and Arthur hits Luis in the head with a "blackjack," or a large club. Barely pausing, Erik says that Arthur "takes care of my light work," and walks off the field.

Thursday, November 23, is Thanksgiving. Tino and Theresa are absent from school and Henry says that it's because their family business is under threat from the freezing temperatures. Henry says all the members of the family will be working all night to try to keep the tangerine trees from freezing. Paul suggests that they go to the farm after school and help. Henry agrees and they get a ride with Henry's brother. Paul calls home to tell his mother about the plan. She seems upset and says she's been back to the storage unit. Paul pitches in with Tino, who accepts Paul's presence, and helps with all the efforts to save the tangerines. When it grows too cold outside, Paul and the other youngsters are sent inside to warm up. Eventually, Paul's ordered inside for the remainder of the night because he's so cold and tired. The next morning, Tino teases him, saying that he'd been sunburned the last time he'd worked with them and too cold this time. Luis tells Paul that a group of people, including football player Antoine Thomas, isn't happy with Erik and are probably going to get revenge for Erik's recent actions.

There's no school on Friday, November 24, and Paul sleeps most of the day. Paul looks at the paper and sees the list of all-county soccer players. His father asks if Paul made the team and Paul is angered by the question. He turns the tables, asking his dad how many games he'd played in, what position he'd played and pointing out very clearly that his father hadn't been to any games. Just as this conversation is heating up, Paul's mom answers the phone and hears from a neighbor that someone has smashed up mailboxes all over the neighborhood and painted on a wall. Paul's dad says that it's



probably the football players from Tangerine High who had been beaten by Lake Windsor.

On Monday, November 27, Paul stays home from school at his mother's insistence. Paul knows that this is the day Erik is supposed to be confronted by Antoine and the others, but when Erik arrives home with no signs of injuries, Paul knows something went wrong with Luis's plan. A homeowners' association meeting is held and Mr. Costello says that several houses that have been tented while exterminators sprayed for bugs have been robbed. On Tuesday, November 28, Paul learns that Luis is dead. The rumor is that Luis died of an aneurysm, probably from being hit in the head by a limb the night of the freeze. Paul does some research and learns that the blow to Luis's head by Arthur could have caused the aneurysm. On Wednesday, November 29, Theresa calls and tells Paul not to come to Luis's funeral. On Thursday, November 30, Paul doesn't attend the funeral but spends some time reflecting and feels better.

On Friday, December 1, Paul takes another sick day, though he's not really sick. He notes that his mother seems so preoccupied that she doesn't object. There's an athletic awards ceremony at Lake Windsor, and as Arthur and Erik head for the platform, Tino and Victor rush in and tackle the two, beating them severely because of the element of surprise. Victor escapes but Tino is caught by a school official. Without really thinking about it, Paul jumps from the bleachers, tackling the school official and giving Tino the chance to run. Paul's dad is very angry over Paul's action and his mother recognizes Victor and Tino from the Tangerine soccer team. Paul runs away from the school and he's outside the wall at their house, looking at the graffiti sprayed over the wall, when Erik and Arthur arrive. Both have obviously taken a beating and their faces are swollen. Paul says that he knows he should be afraid, but isn't. Paul tells them that he saw Arthur hit Luis and that he knows that's what caused Luis's death. Erik is nearly hysterical and he shouts at Arthur but calls him "Castor." As Paul looks at the wall, he's suddenly flooded with memories. Erik and a boy named Castor had been friends in a subdivision called Silver Meadows when Erik was five. When Castor was punished for spray painting graffiti on a wall in the subdivision, he became convinced that Paul had told on him. Erik held Paul down and pried open his eyelids while Castor sprayed paint in Paul's eyes. They'd left Paul writhing on the ground and screaming. About that time, there was an eclipse of the sun and the story became that Paul had stared at the eclipse, causing the damage to his own eyes.

Paul gets home and confronts his mom, asking if she knew that Erik had been involved when Castor sprayed paint in Paul's eyes. His mother says she had been. His father says they'd hoped Paul would forget because they'd wanted to find a way to keep Paul from hating Erik.

On Saturday, December 2, Shandra and her brother, Antoine, are visiting Mr. Donnelly, but Paul doesn't know why until later. On Sunday, December 3, the newspaper arrives with the story that Antoine had come forward, telling the truth about his residency. He does not live in the Lake Windsor district and has therefore played on the football team illegally. The athletic association, in view of Antoine's confession and his role in the team's success, declares that every game played by the school over the past three



years - since Antoine became a member of the team - to be null and void. That means that all statistics from those games are also null. When Paul's father says that he had no idea that Antoine was playing illegally, Paul calls him on it, pointing out that all the other players are seen around town or in the neighborhood, but Antoine was never seen here because he doesn't live here. Paul's father doesn't say anything but seems to realize that Paul is right. Later in the day, a group of residents come to the Fisher home. Arthur's father is there as well as all the families who have had the blue tents over their homes while the exterminators worked. Paul's mother says that she found stolen items in their storage unit and that Erik had been standing watch outside while Arthur, wearing a gas mask, robbed the houses. Paul's parents and Arthur's father promise to pay restitution and to give the stolen property back immediately if everyone will promise not to press charges. They point out that the stolen items will be tied up for a long time if there's a court case. The owners reluctantly agree, though it's evident that they have no sympathy for Erik and Arthur.

As this meeting is going on, the phone rings. Paul answers and Joey says that the police are looking for Arthur. When Paul says that Arthur is at his house, Joey relays that to the police. When the meeting breaks up and Arthur and his father step outside, police arrest Arthur for the murder of Luis Cruz. Arthur's father objects, saying that Luis had no business on school property and that Arthur's action was self-defense. Paul interrupts, saying Arthur used a blackjack to hit Luis and that Erik had told Arthur to do it.

Just as the police leave, Grandmom and Grandpop arrive. Paul's mother finally agrees with Paul that they have to know everything and Grandpop says that Erik's problems stem from the fact that he wasn't punished for what he'd done to Paul. They stay only a short time but promise to help in any way they can.

On Monday, December 4, Paul and his mother are summoned to the principal's office and Paul is expelled for jumping on the school official at Lake Windsor. Tino tries to stand up for Paul, saying that Paul fainted and fell off the bleachers, but he's expelled anyway. Tino and Victor, because they assaulted students and not school officials, are only suspended. Paul leaves the school to discover that his mother has arranged for him to attend St. Anthony's for the rest of the school year. Paul says that he wants to return to Tangerine in the fall. His mother points out that there's a problem because they don't live in the district, but Paul says they have to work it out.

On Tuesday, December 5, Erik has to go to the police station. Arthur is claiming that it was all Erik's fault and the family doesn't know what might happen with the situation. Paul is told by police to write down everything that happened the day Luis was hit but says he includes a lot of information, such as how people looked up to Luis and what people thought of Erik. On Wednesday, December 6, Paul's dad takes him to school for his first day at St. Anthony's.



Pages 201 - 299 Analysis

Paul notes that he doesn't look at Erik immediately after the incident in which Erik hits Tino, but when he does look up, Erik seems almost afraid. Erik might have realized that punching a seventh grader in the face was taking his bullying too far. It seems that at this point, Erik may be afraid that Paul will stand up for himself and tell on Erik. It's inconceivable that Paul doesn't and it's a statement to the relationship between the two brothers, and between Paul and his parents, that he says nothing about Erik's attack.

When Antoine comes forward with the information that he'd been playing illegally on the Lake Windsor football team, it suddenly becomes clear why Shandra had avoided publicity. She and Antoine are siblings and live in the same household. Their home is in the Tangerine school district, but Antoine points out that the Tangerine district isn't a team that gets recognition. Antoine says it's a common practice but that he realizes it was wrong and that it's time to tell the truth. When Antoine sees Paul outside Mr. Donnelly's house, he references the fact that Paul was under the bleachers when Arthur hit Luis on the head. It's obvious that Luis's death has made an impact on Antoine and that he now sees the need to do the right thing. It may also be that he sees how his lies have impacted his sister's opportunities for recognition in her own right.



Characters

Paul Fisher

Paul is the younger of two sons. When he is twelve, his family moves from their home in Houston to Tangerine County, Florida. There, Paul is looking forward to joining the soccer team at the Lake Windsor Middle School. He is accepted to the team but then denied the opportunity to play because he is legally blind. Paul is devastated by the news. When he later has the opportunity to transfer to another school with a clean slate, he does so and is accepted on that soccer team though he's fully aware that he's going to be only a substitute. Paul is adaptable in that he starts his term at Tangerine Middle School with no expectations, which probably made him more readily accepted than he might otherwise have been. Paul is afraid of Erik and realizes that there's some dark secret in the family's past, but can't quite remember what that secret is. At one point, when a high school football player is killed by lightning, Paul says that he would have been sad if it was Erik, but notes that it's because he knows there's a secret and that he doesn't want Erik to die and take that secret with him. Paul eventually remembers the secret and realizes that Erik is to blame for his poor eyesight. He also comes to realize that he has to stand up for himself, and finds the courage to do that when he remembers that Luis wasn't afraid to stand up to Erik.

Caroline Fisher

Paul's mother is obviously interested in both Paul and Erik and spends more time with Paul than his father does. Paul's mother sets out on their move from Houston to Florida as one might begin a military endeavor. Paul makes a note that his mother insists that the house be in perfect order before she leaves it as if the impression of the buyers matter to her, even though she doesn't know the buyers. Paul's mother discovers the stolen items Erik has stashed in the storage unit. She doesn't try to hide it, as some parents might have in that situation. But when she calls Erik inside to face the people he'd robbed, Erik stays outside. It's Arthur's father who demands that Arthur go inside and Erik follows. Paul's mother informs the officials at the Lake Windsor Middle School that Paul is "legally blind." Neither she nor Paul realize the consequences of this action, which is that Paul is not eligible to play soccer. When Paul transfers to Tangerine Middle School, he assumes that he'll be able to start over and that there will be no need for the school officials to know of his vision problems. When Tangerine school officials request his letter, Paul's mother picks them up from Lake Windsor Middle School. Paul is devastated when he learns this, knowing that the information about his vision is in his records. But his mother tells him that she'd removed that page from his file.



Mr. Fisher

Paul's father, he is a civil engineer and takes a job in Tangerine County which prompts the family's move to Florida. Paul's father is caught up in what Paul calls the Erik Fisher Football Dream. At one point, Paul asks his father for Erik's statistics over the previous football season and his father is able to comply immediately, but has no idea how Paul's soccer season has gone. It's evident that his father is more interested in Erik than in Paul.

Luis Cruz

Older brother of Theresa and Tino, Luis has a limp from falling out of a tree at a young age. His family is involved in the citrus business and Luis has engineered a new species of tangerine. Luis goes to the Lake Windsor High School football field to confront Erik after Erik hits Tino. But at the school, Arthur hits Luis in the head with a blackjack, and a few days later Luis dies of an aneurysm. Paul greatly admires Luis and that admiration prompts him to tell the police what he saw and heard during the attack.

Erik Fisher

Paul's older brother, he is a football star. Erik is self-absorbed and a bully. He tends to surround himself with friends he can count on to be completely dependent on Erik. Erik was responsible for the action that caused Paul's loss of vision and seems to display no guilt for that action. Erik burglarizes a lot of homes in the neighborhood.

Tino Cruz

Theresa's twin, he is Luis's little brother. Tino is a member of the soccer team at Tangerine Middle School. Tino is visiting Paul's house when Erik makes fun of him then attacks him.

Arthur Bauer

The boy who becomes friends with Erik as soon as the Fishers arrive at Lake Windsor Downs. Arthur has a truck and the two boys are often driving around in the mud. Arthur is a football player and is as big a bully as Erik. It's Arthur who hits Luis Cruz in the head with a black jack, causing Luis's death. When arrested for the crime, Arthur points the finger at Erik.

Joey Costello

Mike's little brother, Joey and Paul are in the same grade. Joey is a member of the Lake Windsor Middle School soccer team and thinks it's unfair that Paul is denied



membership because of his eyesight. Joey transfers to Tangerine Middle School but doesn't fit in and transfers back to Lake Windsor.

Mr. Donnelly

Father of one of the football players and the editor of the Tangerine Times, the local newspaper, he is a resident of Lake Windsor Downs. He agrees with Paul's mom when she says that football practice shouldn't be held in the afternoons when thunderstorms and lightning are a constant threat. It's Mr. Donnelly who breaks the story about Antoine's residency issue.

Betty Bright

The coach of the Tangerine Middle School soccer team, she is tough and demanding of her players. She is a former track athlete and was headed to the Olympics when she was younger. When the coach of Lake Windsor's soccer team wants to argue that Paul is ineligible to play soccer because he doesn't live in the Tangerine school district, Coach Bright stands up to him and says that she can make things difficult for the Lake Windsor football team because one of their players is in the same situation.



Objects/Places

Houston

Where Paul's family lives prior to moving to Florida.

Tangerine County

Where Paul's family lives in Florida.

Tangerine County Civil Engineering Service

Where Paul's father is hired initially as an engineer and then as director.

Lake Windsor Downs

The name of the housing development where Paul's family lives.

Lake Windsor High School

Where Paul attends until the sinkhole destroys part of the campus.

Tangerine Middle School

Where Paul transfers to after the sinkhole incident.

St. Anthony's Catholic School

Where Paul's mother wants to send him after the sinkhole incident at Lake Windsor Middle School and where he winds up going after he is expelled from Tangerine Middle School.

Ohio

Where Paul's grandparents live.

The Erik Fisher Football Dream

What Paul calls it whenever the conversation turns to Erik's football career.

Tangerine Middle School War Eagles

The mascot for the soccer team Paul joins.



Themes

Coming of Age

Paul is the main character of the story and the one that most exemplifies this theme. Paul ages only a few months over the course of the story but there are references to Paul as a youngster of five, meaning the reader has glimpses of Paul over a seven-year period of his life. There does not seem to be a great deal of change until the last month of the book. Paul is a quiet child and accepts that his parents, especially his father, are wrapped up in what Paul calls the "Erik Fisher Football Dream." Paul is aware of this but accepts it without question for a long time. There comes a time when Paul is angry at the situation and asks his father to cite Erik's records over the past football season. His father can do that without giving it any thought but cannot answer Paul's questions about his soccer season. Paul's speaking up is a sign of his coming of age. Later, when Paul sees Arthur Bauer being arrested for Luis Cruz's death, Paul again speaks up, this time to tell what he heard and saw the day Arthur hit Luis in the head. Paul had wanted to bring attention to Erik's actions for some time but had been unable to find the courage to do so until that moment. While Paul is the main example of this theme, it seems that Paul's mother is a minor example. When she realizes that telling the school officials that Paul is legally blind creates problems for him, she agrees to keep that information from the officials at his new school. While this could be construed as irresponsible, it's more likely that Paul's mother is suddenly seeing that Paul has been shorted time and attention over the years and that he should be given some chances and options.

Family Dynamics

The way family members interact is an important theme in this book because it helps define the characters. As an example of this, Paul is afraid of his brother, Erik, and knows there's something in their past that has prompted this fear though he can't remember the details. Paul sees Erik's faults and his wrongdoings, and wants to tell his parents, but is afraid they won't believe him. It's a statement of the family dynamics that Paul believes his parents won't listen. Another important aspect of the family dynamics is seen when Paul's mother tells the teachers at his new school that Paul is "legally blind." Paul is upset from the moment she begins the explanation but she seems incapable of keeping the information secret, probably because of her efforts to keep Paul safe. While she is trying to keep Paul safe, she is ignoring the signs of Erik's wrongdoing. Another aspect of these family dynamics is seen when Paul's mother finds the items Erik has stolen. She doesn't tell Paul about the situation but doesn't try to keep it a secret. She seems to realize that Erik has to be punished for some of his wrongdoings, though she apparently didn't insist that he be punished for hurting Erik.



A Desire to do What's Right

Paul seems to want to do what's right, though he doesn't always have the courage to do so. This desire - and the lack of courage - is seen in Paul's reaction to the situation when Erik hits Tino. Paul tells Tino that confronting Erik isn't worth the trouble it will cause, but Tino disagrees. Paul doesn't say anything immediately after Erik hits Tino but later wants to tell his parents about the incident. Paul says that he has it all worked out, that he knows exactly what he wants to say to his father, but that he can't bring himself to say it. In this case, Paul wants to do the right thing but can't find the courage to do that. What's interesting is that Paul seems to have come to accept Erik's bullying as normal and up until the moment Tino stands up to Erik, Paul doesn't really seem to realize that he could play a role in Erik's behavior. But with Tino's action, Paul seems empowered and comes to want to do the right thing. At this point, Paul's silent acceptance of whatever Erik does is so ingrained that Paul doesn't seem to be able to break that cycle. Paul faces the same situation when Luis confronts Erik. Paul knows that Luis is no match for Erik physically but draws from Luis's courage. Finally, a football player who knew that Paul witnessed Luis's beating tells Paul that he has to stand up for what's right. It seems that it takes all these events to help Paul finally find the courage to do the right thing, but he's more than willing to do so when he finally reaches that point.

Style

Point of View

The story is written in first person from the limited perspective of Paul Fisher. Paul is twelve and, as such, has a limited view of the world. Despite this, he is intelligent and presents his story in a reasonable manner. While many first-person accounts are biased, it seems that Paul's assessment of himself is honest and truthful. The limited perspective means the reader only learns about things as Paul becomes aware of them. For example, Paul struggles from the first of the book with a memory and he seems to know that it has something to do with his poor vision, but he can't quite grasp the entire memory. He does know that he's afraid of Erik. While Erik is a bully, there seems to be a connection between Paul's memory and his fear of Erik. While the reader can begin to sense that Erik had something to do with Paul's poor eyesight, it's not until Paul's memory of the event emerges completely that the reader is given the full story. This limitation is reasonable, considering the structure of the book. It should be noted that this book is presented as a diary. That means that the aspects of his life that are most important to Paul are presented in greater detail. For example, Paul goes into great detail about several soccer games, explaining techniques and plays, because the soccer games are important to him. This also seems reasonable to the story. Any twelve-year-old keeping a diary would naturally focus more on the aspect of daily life that most interested him.

Setting

The story is set in Tangerine County, Florida. The geographic location is described in some detail and those details mesh with the facts of the location. For example, it's noted that tangerine groves were destroyed in order to clear land for the housing development, New Windsor Downs. Paul learns that it's possible to tell where the majority of the trees were buried by looking at the contours of the land. The specific settings include Paul's home, his neighborhood, the family's storage unit, Lake Windsor Middle School, Tangerine Middle School, and several soccer fields. The settings are described in adequate detail without bogging down the story. The story begins in August and goes on through Christmas of that same year. The year is not specified. The copyright on the book is 1997 and it seems reasonable that the setting is around that time. There are modern conveniences and there has been a building boom in Florida, both details that agree with the time setting. Paul has a computer of his own in his room and there is a larger computer in the family room that he uses for larger projects. An important piece of technology that seems to be missing is the cell phone. Paul doesn't mention a cell phone at all and it seems that his brother Erik would likely have been given one if it was readily available.



Language and Meaning

The story is written in a fairly straight-forward manner. There are few difficult words and it seems appropriate to the target audience. The action flows quickly though Paul often becomes bogged down in details about soccer games. Several of these descriptions go on for several pages and readers who are not familiar with soccer may become confused or bored with those passages. The story includes narrative and dialogue. The dialogue is reasonable and does not seem formal or stiff. It should be noted that Paul presents the dialogue always from his memory. Therefore, the words of the dialogue may have been changed to fit in with Paul's memory or his manner of speaking. Had this been a nonfiction book, that fact might have become an issue. As a fiction book it is merely a matter to be remembered and it's up to the reader to decide if it matters. Paul introduces a fairly large cast of characters as classmates, first at Lake Windsor Middle School and then at Tangerine Middle School. The identities of the various characters may be confusing at first, but the few who really matter to the story line soon become obvious.

Structure

The book is divided into sections that resemble entries in a diary or journal. At one point, Paul says that he refers back to his entries in order to refresh his memory of what happened. At another point, he says that he took time to finish writing a section before going to bed. Entries vary greatly in length. Some are less than a page but others are several pages. For example, the entry dated Friday, November 10, is thirteen pages while Tuesday, September 12, is only slightly more than a page in length. There are several dates that are entered twice. In these, Paul refers to the first as the date and adds the word, "later" to the second entry of the same date. The book is further divided into three "parts." Part one begins with the arrival of Paul and his mother at their new home in Tangerine County, Florida and ends on page 94. The first entry of the section is dated Friday, August 18, and the final entry of the section is dated Friday, September 15. This final entry is the day Paul realizes he can transfer to Tangerine Middle School and be eligible to play soccer. Part two begins with a diary entry dated Monday, September 18, with Paul arriving for his first day of school at Tangerine Middle School. The final entry of the section is dated Friday, November 10. This is the day the Tangerine Middle School soccer team faces the team from the Lake Windsor Middle School. Part three begins on page 201 with the diary entry dated Monday, November 20. The section opens with Paul's friends visiting to discuss their science project and includes the description of Erik hitting Tino in the face. This section concludes with page 303 and the entry dated Wednesday, December 6, which is the end of the book.



Quotes

"But first Mom had to make sure that I didn't overlook anything. She was worried that the people who bought our house, people we've never met, would find a McDonald's swizzle stick and think less of us."

Tangerine, p. 1

"Then I realized it: They were the two people who would benefit from Mike Costello's death. And they were celebrating it."

Part 1, Tuesday, September 5, p. 52

"The football stadium had lost half of its seating capacity. And Erik Fisher, the soon-to-be-famous placekicker, has just lost half of his audience."

Part 1, Tuesday, September 12, p. 87

"For Joey, our house may as well be covered with canvas and bound by ropes, because it's filled with poison."

Part 2, Wednesday, September 27, p. 145

"Maybe I am just a sub, maybe I am just along for the ride, but this is the greatest thing that has ever happened to me."

Part 2, Thursday, November 2, p. 170

"It was like a movie - like a movie set, anyway - painted on plywood and propped up by two-by-fours. As phony as an Erik Fisher football hero smile."

Part 2, Friday, November 10, p. 188

"I was on the verge of asking him, 'Dad? Did you see Erik hit Tino in the face so hard that he nearly knocked him out?' But I didn't."

Part 3, Tuesday, November 21, p. 207

"That's one thing about Grandmom and Grandpop - they couldn't care less about the Erik Fisher Football Dream. They never, ever mention it and when Dad brings it up, they do their best to change the subject."

Part 3, Thursday, November 23, Thanksgiving, p. 213

"And I remembered Erik's fingers prying my eyelids open while Vincent Castor sprayed white paint into them. They left me screaming and rolling around on the floor of the garage."

Part 3, Friday, December 1, p. 263

"The Blue Tents clearly felt no pity for those two thieves sitting in their chairs, staring at the floor - voiceless, useless, lifeless - like a pair of mannequins in a Dumpster."

Part 3, Sunday, December 3 later, p. 281



"I stood up straight and faced them all, like I had seen Luis do. 'I saw - I heard Erik Fisher tell him to do it.'"

Part 3, Sunday, December 3 later, p. 284

"I started writing about Luis, and what he meant to the people around him, and how they depended on him, and why they looked up to him. Then I tried to write the same thing about Erik: What did he mean to the people around him?"

Part 3, Tuesday, December 5 later, p. 302

Topics for Discussion

Describe Paul Fisher. What is his "handicap?" What is the story behind that problem? What does Paul believe happened to him? Why does he believe this? What does he finally remember as the truth? How does this memory happen? What is the family's reaction to Paul remembering the truth?

Who is Erik Fisher? What kind of person is he? What sport does he play? How is he different from his brother? What is it that finally gets Erik into so much trouble?

Why does Paul decide not to tell his parents about Erik hitting Tino? What does this indicate about the family dynamics? What happens to give Paul the courage to stand up to Erik?

Describe Paul's initial role on the Lake Windsor soccer team? How does that compare with his role on the Tangerine soccer team? How does he come to participate on each team? Which team does Paul fit into better? Why?

Compare the Tangerine Middle School with the Lake Windsor Middle School. How are the two similar? How are they different? Which does Paul fit into better? Why? What does Paul say about his plans for the following year?

Give a brief overview of the story. Choose three incidents important to the story and provide thorough details on all three. What is the impact of each on Paul and his family?

Who is Theresa? Tino? Shandra? Antoine? Luis? Mike? Joey? Arthur? Gino? What role does each play in the story? What role does each play in Paul's life?